CLAIMS

That which is claimed:

[1]   1.   A method of operating a communications network, comprising:

providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node;

associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint; and

routing traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint.

[2]   2.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the communications network is a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS), wherein the traffic comprises packet traffic, and wherein the first identifier is a first MPLS label and the second identifier is a second MPLS label.

[3]   3.   The method of Claim 2, wherein the first node is associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node is associated with a second LATA.

[4]   4.   The method of Claim 3, wherein the first one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a second IEC.

[5]   5.   The method of Claim 4, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the method further comprising:

receiving a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

[6]   6.   The method of Claim 4, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the method further comprising:

receiving at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.

[7]   7.   A system for operating a communications network, comprising:

means for providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node;

means for associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint; and

means for routing traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint.

[8]   8.   The system of Claim 7, wherein the communications network is a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS), wherein the traffic comprises packet traffic, and wherein the first identifier is a first MPLS label and the second identifier is a second MPLS label.

[9]   9.   The system of Claim 8, wherein the first node is associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node is associated with a second LATA.

[10]   10.   The system of Claim 9, wherein the first one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a second IEC.

[11]   11.   The system of Claim 10, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the system further comprising:

means for receiving a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

means for marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

[12]   12.   The system of Claim 10, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the system further comprising:

means for receiving at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

means for marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.

[13]   13.   A computer program product for operating a communications network, comprising:

a computer readable storage medium having computer readable program code embodied therein, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code configured to provide a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node;

computer readable program code configured to associate a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint; and

computer readable program code configured to route traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint.

[14]   14.   The computer program product of Claim 13, wherein the communications network is a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS), wherein the traffic comprises packet traffic, and wherein the first identifier is a first MPLS label and the second identifier is a second MPLS label.

[15]   15.   The computer program product of Claim 14, wherein the first node is associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node is associated with a second LATA.

[16]   16.   The computer program product of Claim 15, wherein the first one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links is associated with a second IEC.

[17]   17   The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the computer program product further comprising:

computer readable program code configured to receive a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

computer readable program code configured to mark the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

[18]   18.   The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the computer program product further comprising:

computer readable program code configured to receive at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

computer readable program code configured to mark the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.